

B Section

I remember Dahlonega...

Elsie Todd Daniels recalls Christmas in Lost Hollow

AS TOLD TO

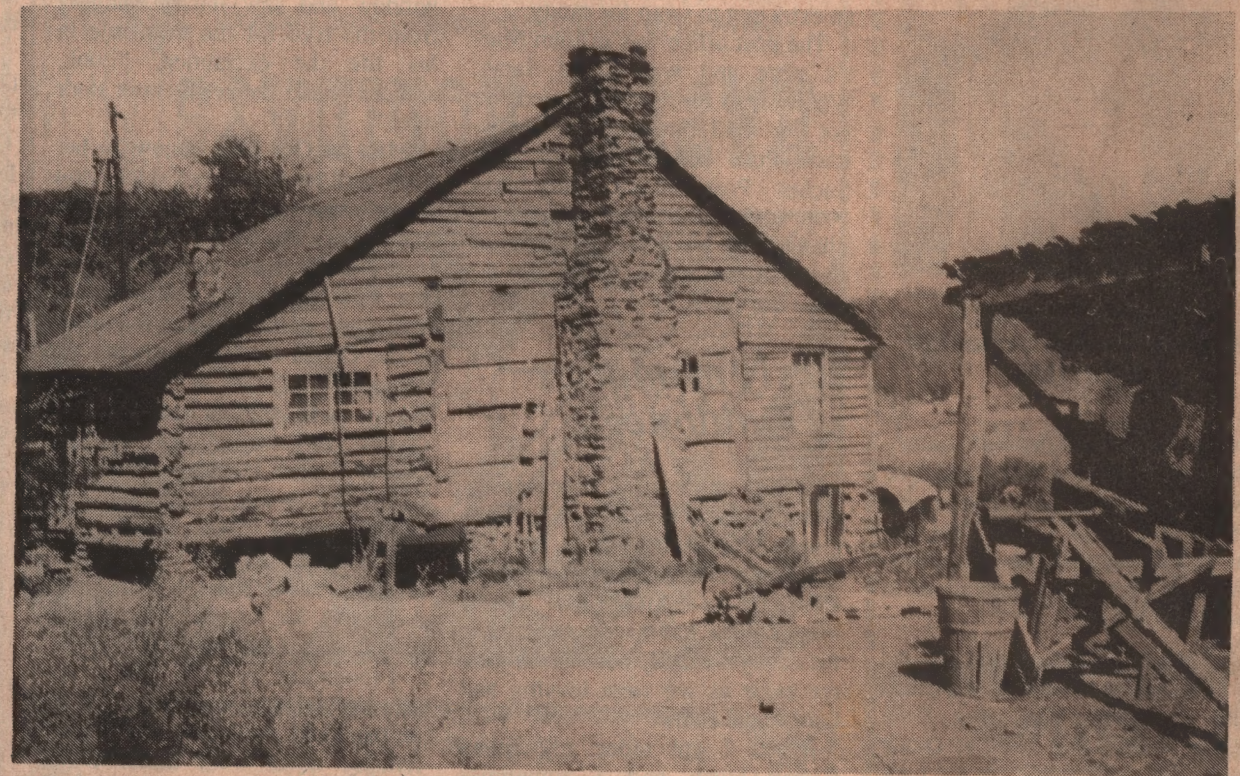
ANNE DISMUKES AMERSON

I grew up in a log cabin in an area north of Suches called "Lost Hollow." We were dirt poor and had to "make do" and "get by" with very little, but my mother (Zura Gooch Todd) made Christmas as happy for us children as she could with her limited resources. She saved all the material scraps from the dresses she sewed for us and used them to make the cutest clothes for our dolls.

With all else she had to do, I don't know how she ever found the time, but she even worked button-holes for the tiny buttons and sewed on pockets so small they held only one thin dime.

On Christmas Eve mother always made a wonderful black walnut cake with chocolate frosting made from Hershey's cocoa. If you've never tried to get the meat out of a black walnut, you have no idea what a treat that was! Our brother Buddy (Marion) got a piece of the cake on Christmas Eve because that was his birthday. Another piece was carefully cut and set out for Santa Claus, but the rest of us didn't get a taste until Christmas Day.

Mother also made the best teacakes (old-fashioned sugar cookies) I've ever tasted. She tied them up in a flour sack and hung them up high where we children couldn't reach them until she was ready to give them out. I've often



The log cabin at Todd's Dahlia Farm showing its "growth" (additions) as the Alvin Todd family grew (6 children). Mrs. Todd's grandfather, Jim Gooch, built the center part around 1878-79.

wondered if it was the days of mellowing or the anticipation that made them so good.

Another Christmas treat was the apples which we had picked in the fall and individually wrapped in pages from an outdated Sears Roebuck catalogue. Instead of storing them in the basement where they would pick up the flavor of the dirt floor, we kept them in a bushel

basket covered with leaves and stashed in a big hollow chestnut stump on the mountain behind our house. No animals ever bothered them, and they stayed sweet and firm all winter.

My brothers and sisters and I went out into the woods to cut a Christmas tree. Sometimes we got a pine, but it was usually a holly tree with red berries on it. We decorated

it with strings of home-grown popcorn and paper chains which we had colored with crayons.

We each hung our cotton stockings by the fireplace, and on Christmas morning we would usually find an orange (always a very special treat), a few pieces of candy and occasionally some small toy. Our stockings also contained

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I REMEMBER

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ELSIE TODD DANIELS
Riverview School, Dahlonega
Fall of 1966.

to be fed, and the cows had to be milked. I couldn't go visit my friend Clara Gooch except when her sister Inez came home with my sister Thelma to do my chores. We would switch the other way about an equal number of times.

Mother would send us walking about two miles up an isolated mountain dirt road to John Marr's store. We carried eggs to exchange for sugar and other items we didn't grow. If our chickens were laying well, sometimes she would give us an extra egg to swap for candy.

The post office was in John Marr's store and was called Sarah. When Sarah Post Office closed, we got our mail through the Gaddistown Post Office and later the Suches Post Office. Nowadays route and box numbers sometimes change, but we had three different post offices while living in the same log cabin.

Early memories of Dahlonega

One of my earliest memories is going across the mountain to Dahlonega with daddy (Alvin Todd) to buy some 200-lb. bags of fertilizer from Moore's Store. Mr. Robert Moore must have seen me eyeing the candy wistfully because he took me aside as we were leaving and handed me some.

When I got older, my friend Clara Gooch and I sometimes walked from Woody Gap School to the Suches post office and caught a ride with Arthur Panter, who carried the mail to Blue Ridge and back to Dahlonega. There was usually a 50 cent charge for the ride, but he never charged us, I guess because he knew we didn't have any money.

When we got to the Dahlonega post office, we walked to visit Clara's sister, Kathleen, who married Ralph Fitts. We didn't have electricity yet at Lost Hollow, and it was always dark inside our log cabin, so I loved to go to Kathleen's apartment because it was so bright by comparison.

Woody Gap School only had 11 grades when I graduated in 1948 three weeks after my 16th birthday. I wanted to attend North Georgia College, but there was no money for me to stay in the dormitory. For-

tunately, an elderly lady named Mollie McGee offered me free room and board to stay with her and do the housework. I made money for my books by washing and ironing military uniforms and working in the college library for Susie Harris and Mary Hood.

It's funny how certain things stick in your memory over the years. I'll never forget the winter Mrs. McGee's 3-year-old great-grandson was visiting her from Panama. When he looked out the window and saw icicles hanging from the roof for the first time in his life, he exclaimed, "Look, somebody left the refrigerator door open!"

Mrs. McGee kept a cow in her back yard for Clarence Couch, who lived further up Park Street, and he came every day to get the cow and milk her. He was a big cheerful fellow who was always whistling. He had many college cadets boarding at the Couch House (originally the home of Col. W. P. Price, now known by its original name, "Seven Oaks"), and one of them was my cousin Warren Hendrix. Whenever I went by to ask for Warren, Mr. Couch would tease me saying, "How many more of your cousins do you want to see?" He had a pet nickname for everybody, and he always called me "Cousin."

I remember the first time I ever saw television. There was a TV set in the local pool hall, but "nice" females never went there. When my brother Georgie was scheduled to be on TV for being the first boy in Georgia to win the state 4-H Club 100-bushel Corn Club, my sister Nell and I overcame our scruples and sneaked into the pool hall to watch him!

Teaching school

I became a school teacher and taught at Riverview School just off the Dawsonville Highway. At that time it was a demonstration school for North Georgia College. Dr. Orby Southard was in charge and would have his education students come regularly to the classrooms and observe.

I soon discovered that three of my 7th grade students were total non-readers. Those rough-neck boys not only didn't know their ABC's, they weren't interested in

learning, so I had to use some unorthodox methods of motivating them to work in their own little reading group.

When one of them wanted to know how to spell "hell," I told him I would teach him if he would learn how to spell "bell," "sell," "tell," "yell" and other rhyming words. He agreed, and we were in the process of spelling "hell" when Dr. Southard walked into the classroom! I had some explaining to do, but those boys surprised all of us by continuing to learn many basic words by this approach.

I was living in Dahlonega and driving to Woody Gap School every day to teach in the fall of 1967 when a rare cloudburst dumped an incredible amount of rain over Suches. School was dismissed, and those of us who lived on the other side of the mountain were told to "get going fast" because if the dam at Woody's Lake broke, the bridge would be washed out, and we would be stranded.

When I got to the bridge it was covered with water, but men in yellow slickers with flashlights motioned me across. It was raining so hard that the windshield wipers

were hardly working. I made it up to Woody Gap, barely creeping along because I could scarcely see for the downpour.

As I was driving down the other side of the mountain, I heard a strange noise and felt the car rock. Looking in my rear view mirror, I saw that a huge mudslide had missed sweeping me off the road by inches! I later learned that the state highway truck I had passed a few moments earlier had been caught between two slides and was trapped for several days before the road was cleared.

A sturdy wooden bridge was washed out on the road to my parent's dahlia farm and was later found in a cornfield a mile-and-a-half downstream. My husband Cecil was working in the dahlia display house, which was separated from my parents' house by another stream, which rose from 18 inches to six feet deep before he realized what was happening. Later when the rain abated somewhat, deep water still covered the bridge. Mother knew Cecil was getting hungry so she put some food in a tightly sealed plastic bag and threw it across the stream to him.

The dahlias were in full bloom, and a large percentage of them were destroyed by the torrential rain. The pond where my family raised rainbow trout was so high out of its banks that the fish were found swimming in pools of water throughout rows of dahlias.

The disastrous flood washed away our plans to make the move to Todd's Dahlia Farm our last move. My parents sold the dahlia farm, so Cecil and I had to fold up our house plans and make new plans for ourselves and our five children. It was with sadness we finished packing our household goods on Christmas Day 1967. The next day we moved to Macon where we still live, but we still hope that our dream of moving back to Dahlonega will one day come true.

I wouldn't want to go back to living in a log cabin with no electricity, but I have many fond memories of growing up at Lost Hollow. Dear were the times when we "made do" with what we had, especially at Christmas, to make it a happy and meaningful time.

No end to the chores

There was no end of farm and household chores to be done. The oil lamps had to be washed and filled every day. Wood had to be chopped and brought in for the fireplace and the cookstove. Food had to be prepared "from scratch" and the dishes washed after we heated the water. The children had